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ART GOSSIP.

An artist friend writing from Brunnen on Lake Lucerne, under date of August 4th., says:

"The scenery is superb and the sketching tip-top. I know you would be charmed with it, and I can imagine the enthusiasm with which you would gaze on these splendid snow-capped mountains, this superb lake and these beautiful valleys—and certainly the valleys of Switzerland are enchantingly lovely. Imagine an undulating plain extending several miles, and every inch of it cultivated to the highest extent; all kinds of grain and vegetables growing with the greatest luxuriance and abundance; through it roils, and roars, and dashes a little mountain stream, clear as glass, and cold as ice itself; until it is lost in the blue waters of Lake Lucerne, just discernible in the distance. A few miles off you see a beautiful little village, with quaint old houses, the roofs covered with tiles, or with old shingles and boards, on which immense rocks and stones are piled to keep them in their places during the tremendous winter gales. Stacks of grain or hay are occasionally to be seen, and in the centre of the village rises a tall and slender church spire. Beyond the town are beautifully wooded hills, broken up by farms and orchards, and behind them rise immense mountains, up, up, up, until their summits are lost in the clouds. Picturesque chalets, or farm-houses are built far up the mountain, almost to the very top, sometimes on the brink of frightful precipices, and in places almost inaccessible, strange and terrible looking footpaths wind up the mountain side, and occasionally a goat will spring along from crag to crag, as if unconscious of the danger of his way. Above all, is the bluest of blue skies and a few light fleecy clouds are just hovering around the tops of some still more distant mountains, whose snow-capped summits are just discernible in the distance. This is not a fancy sketch, but a real picture such as you can see in almost any of the Swiss Valleys."

The writer visited the Academy exhibition while in Paris and writes: "It was a very interesting exhibition, numbering about four thousand works—many of them very fine, particularly a superb landscape by Oswald Achenbach, and a magnificent picture containing nearly forty life size figures by Dubufe—subject, the Prodigal Son. Saintin (an artist who lived sometime in New York) had a very fine picture of an Italian girl; Bougereau, two superb works. I was very much disappointed in the French landscapes; most of them were very poor, indeed, not by any means equal to the works of our own artists. The figure pieces were better, some of them superb; but even here there was considerable that one could not greatly admire. There were many pictures of nude figures—some very fine, but most of them bad and disgusting."

Speaking of Brussels, he says: "It is a very pleasant city, has a splendid park, some fine statues and a large picture gallery containing many fine works by Rubens, Van Dyke, Jordaens, Van Ostade, Rembrandt, Jan Steen, Titian, Claude Lorraine, and many others. The church of St. Gudule has a very remarkable carved oak pulpit representing the expulsion from Paradise admirably executed by Verbruggen of Antwerp. The stained glass windows in this church are the finest I have ever seen. While at Brussels we rode over to the battle-field of Waterloo, distant about twelve miles from Soignee, in which are some of the most gigantic beech trees I have ever seen."

Having visited the Cathedral at Antwerp, he writes: "In this church are Rubens' masterpieces. The descent from the Cross; and the Elevation to the Cross; both of them wonderful pictures, and well worth a journey across the Atlantic to see. I have formed the very highest opinion of Rubens. Pictures such as his have never been seen in America. In the Museum at Antwerp are several of his best works. His

'Holy Family' I consider to be one of the most remarkable pictures I have ever seen. I sat before it for a long time and left it with regret. Such wonderful color, such perfect drawing and such masterly handling as are shown in the figure of the Infant Jesus in this picture, I have never seen equalled. Rubens was, undoubtedly, a perfect master of his art; and his pictures please me more than any others I have seen in Europe. The Museum has a splendid collection of pictures in addition to those of Rubens. One of the best being the 'Crucifixion' by Van Dyke, a splendid and wonderfully low-toned picture, and there are many others of great excellence."

Having stopped at Cologne, he says: "But there is not much there except the churches and the botanic garden. The Cathedral will be superb if it is ever finished which I think rather doubtful; as it has now been in course of erection over six hundred years, and the spires have not yet risen above the roof."

"All the Catholic churches in Europe have their sacred relics, as a matter of course; and the number of pieces of the real cross one meets is astonishing to behold. If they could all be collected together I think there are enough pieces to freight a ship with and enough left over to build a cross of the same dimensions of the original."

"From Cologne we had a superb sail up the Rhine to Mayence; stopping on the way for several days at Coblenz, a very pretty place, immediately opposite the immense fortress of Ehrenbrunstein, and commanding fine views of the river. I was delighted with the scenery of the Rhine; it is beautiful, picturesque and lovely in the extreme, and I think fully deserves all the praises that have been lavished upon it."

[From the N. O. Picayune.]

MODERN LITERATURE OF FRANCE.

PARIS, July, 1866.

We have lost a man who will long be missed.—Mery, Mery is dead. He was born at Ayglades, some time in 1798, and his christian name (which he seems never to have signed) was Joseph. That is all we know of his family history. Although most literary men may repeat, "Story! Lord bless you there's none to tell, sir!" we naturally yearn to know something of talents' earlier years. Were they happy? Were they precocious? Did mother direct the youthful mind to literature? Was school life easy, or did the future literary man prove a reluctant plodder and was he called "idler" by the master when he was in the poet's "fine phrenzy," roaming from earth to heaven, as imagination bodied forth its mysteries? All we know of Joseph Mery is the year of his birth and his descent from a respectable family, whose name is still honorably borne by his brother, and the latter's children, and his thorough education in the classics (the only true mental training; the modern methods are but acts of cramming) this meagre information his intimate friends seem unable to increase. They really know as little about him as anybody else, for while his most intimate friend makes him a native of Marseilles, there seems to be no reason to doubt that he was born at Ayglades. French biography is notoriously obscure and inaccurate, even in the orthography of French proper names. The windows which display photographs to our cotemporaries show in a striking manner, French carelessness in writing proper names. I have seen M. Auber's name written Haubert, Aubert and Ober; Dr. Riardi written Rico and Ricort. Mery first ventured upon letter press in his 22nd year. His maiden effort was a satire directed to Abbé Elizagaray. It seems to have been sharp, for the Abbé brought suit against the poet, and succeeded in having the latter sentenced to fifteen months imprisonment. When he quitted jail after this long term of confinement he joined the opposition party and began a war on the Bourbon Government, which ended only with the flight of the family from France. At this period of time Alphonse Rabbe was editor of

a newspaper, Le Phocéen, which was most violent in its opposition to the Government. Mery became a contributor to it. Rabbe was a man of great talents, and Miguel, Thiers, Victor Hugo and Alex. Dumas predicted a splendid career to him, and treated him as their peer. He was disolute. His handsome face, winning manner, and fascinating conversation made him welcomed by every woman. He went to Spain. The beauties of Seville intoxicated him. He became diseased. The malady made most rapid progress. He lost his nose before he could return to France. His whole body became one mass of corruption. Death slowly came to his deliverance. His hopes of fame all fled with his nose. But let me not anticipate. After writing some time in Le Phocéen, Mery determined to establish a newspaper of his own. He founded La Méditerranée, which may be said to exist still, for in the course of time it and Le Phocéen were merged into one paper, which was called Le Semaphore, and which is at this day the most flourishing newspaper out of Paris. Mery did not retain long his connection with the Marseilles press. In his twenty-sixth year he came up to Paris at Rabbe's invitation. Rabbe had then begun the series of historical epitomes, which had a great deal of success and which led both Monsieur Thiers and Monsieur Mignet to those historical labors which have given them so much reputation. Rabbe lodged him in his house and made him his private secretary. Mery collected materials for Rabbe's epitome of the history of the Popes. It was a year after Mery had come up to Paris he made the acquaintance of a young man from the South of France, not from Marseilles but from Aveyron county, but as both were from the South they were attracted together. Mery's new friend was then chief editor of Le Nain Jaune, a brilliant and popular satirical paper. His name was Pierre Soule. He enlisted Mery as a contributor to Le Nain Jaune, and Mery continued to write in it long after the chief editor quitted France to escape fine and imprisonment for some daring witticism and to pursue a path in the West which was to lead him to the front rank of the New Orleans bar, to a seat, as a representative of Louisiana, in the Federal Senate, to the United States Embassy at Madrid. When the Hon. Pierre Soule received the appointment of United States Minister to Spain, you published in the Picayune a letter from Mery giving an interesting account of his relations with your distinguished fellow-citizen. Fame, or rather that earnest money of Fame, popularity, did not reward Mery's labors until he published a book. Sir James Macintosh's biographers long ago observed, reputation never fell to the newspaper writer, and they instanced their rather for an example to support their remark. As soon as Mery published his first satire, it bore the barbarous title of Les Sidiennes, his name became known. It met with a great sale. He now began to write with Mons. Barthelemy, (his partner in Les Sidiennes) a series of satires, which had a wonderful run of success. They were paid \$1,000 for their second satire, La Vileliade. I believe they received \$5,000 for the first. They certainly received this sum of money for one of the satires. The second satire was followed by La Corbiereide, Rome et Paris and La Censure. The advent of the Martignac Ministry suspended these satirical publications, and had Charles X been wise and sustained the Cabinet, the revolution of 1830 would have been averted. France did fairly come around to the Bourbon dynasty while Mons. de Martignac was in his power, and would have remained faithful to it could that family—which never learned and never forgot anything—have learned the powers of a Liberal Government and forgotten the France of Louis XIV's day. During this general armistice Mery wrote his poem, "Napoléon en Egypte." When the Martignac cabinet fell the Liberal party renewed the war on the Bourbons; Mery and Barthelemy contributed "La Peyronneide" and "La Guerre d'Alger," as their share of the war. The Bourbons being overthrown wrote a poem, "L'Insurrection," and a national hymn, "La Tricolore," whose music was written by Malevy. You know

the monarchy of July soon gave dissatisfaction to the more advanced members of the Liberal party. Mery and Barthelemy strung their lyre again and their most famous satirical poem, which attached everybody with indiscriminate virulence, was published. It was called "Nemesis." They intended to continue its publication in a series of numbers, but the government informed them they could not do so unless they deposited \$20,000 at the Treasury as guarantee money. This they were unable to do and so there was an end of "Nemesis." And an end too to the literary co-partnership which had existed between him and M. Barthelemy, but what reason led to this rupture has been and is still an unrevealed mystery. The rupture, whatever its causes may have been, was final, and although M. Barthelemy attended Mery's funeral, it is believed their relations were entirely suspended after this dissolution of co-partnership. The poem Napoleon en Egypt and his association with M. Barthelemy (who had been from the first, as he is now, an ardent Bonapartist) led to an invitation from Queen Hortense to visit the Bonapartes at Rome. He now accepted the invitation and was presented to the modern Niobe, Letitia Bonaparte, and to all the members of the family. He remained in Italy some years, and upon his return to France he seems to have thrown aside politics entirely, and to have cooled towards poetry. Henceforth, it is as a prose writer we shall see him except when he makes excursions into the regions of opera, opera comique and plays. His first novel was *Le Bonnet Vert*, which appeared in 1837; this was fast followed by successive stories, which were popular in their day, but are already forgotten. Mery was not a writer for immortality. It may be questioned if he put the best part of himself into his books. There are authors whose breasts like those of some volcano pour out all themselves when they enter into eruption. There are others whose breasts are like the flint which requires collision to draw glittering spark after glittering spark. Mery was one of these last. Again, his works were written under the most disadvantageous circumstances. Mery was an inveterate gambler. He spent all night long at the gaming-table, except during summer, when he would quit Paris for the German bells which you know are open only from 11 A. M., until 11 o'clock P. M. All his money went here, and when he reached the end of his purse, he would go to his publisher and procure an advance. Besides, it may be questioned whether constant commerce with society is favorable to intellectual exertion. The "diner-out" fritters away in copper, or at most, silver small change, the ideas which he ought to transform into gold. Society makes one ready, but it is at loss of depth, and the tone of society dampens, if it does not extinguish enthusiasm, for society is nothing if not critical, and its aims, hopes, sentiments, are so grovelling as to depress the author. I insist upon the bold efforts of Mery in prose and poetry, and his wonderful talents in conversation, because here is the explanation of the reputation enjoyed by Mery here, and the little reputation he enjoys abroad. I quote an anecdote to exhibit this in another light:

I remember when the manager of *La Mode* asked Mery to write a novel for his periodical. Mery, with magnificent sang froid, offered him a choice between any one of the 261 subjects which he had already in his brain. Mery, between soup and coffee, told us *in extenso* some of these innumerable subjects. He sketched the character and situations, acted the scenes, spoke the dialogues. It was charming as he spoke. The manager of *La Mode*, selected *La Circé de Paris*, which appeared under this same title five or six weeks afterwards. To be sure, it was neither a vulgar nor a dull work, but the charm had disappeared, the magical effect had forgotten to go from conversation to the work; this rocket fallen to earth was nothing more than a bit of paper rolled around a pen; the extraordinary superiority of the talker fell in the novel to a mediocrity to which his co-laborers might aspire without too much vanity. Mery's plays, like his novels, disappointed expect-

ation. After hearing Mery talk, managers would be fascinated, and they would feel sure a man of such talents must succeed; but when the play was brought out the charm had disappeared, the magical effect had forgotten to go from conversation to the work. He wrote "books" for operas, and operas comiques and plays for almost every theatre in Paris. In all his life he never had anything like a successful play. The number of odes he wrote exceeds account; he was a sort of poet laureate to the theatres and the court. If a victory was won or a festival recurred, or some auspicious event, cheered the court, Mery was called upon to sing paeans in verse. He owed these calls to his prodigious facility. When other men would have asked days or weeks he asked minutes, and would write the ode on the back of a play-bill, or on visiting cards when no other paper was to be had. His impromptus were some of his best works. There is one of them written on seeing a young lady with a breastpin, on which a dog was represented:

Ayez un chien, un chien couchant
Un chien de garde, un chien de poche,
Mais garder-vous, la belle enfant,
De jamais le mettre à la broche!

Few French authors received more money for their works than Mery got for his. The reason, probably, was the publicity and praises given to everything he did. His social relations disarmed criticism, and made critics praise his works. Besides Mery wrote in a great many newspapers, and this aided him wonderfully. He was always penniless, nevertheless, for the reasons I have mentioned, and because he could never refuse money to a friend or to distress. Had the Emperor not given orders he should want nothing during his long last illness he must have been carried to the hospital. His Majesty supplied all his wants, and when the last struggle was ended the Emperor paid his funeral expenses and gave him a grave. Mery's death had been looked for daily ever since last January. How he survived so long is a wonder to the faculty, for he was afflicted with two most exhausting diseases. He had consumption and cancer. He did, however, cling to life by sheer force of will. Everybody of note in Paris attended his funeral, although the rain came down in torrents. Mery was never married. Messrs. Sainte Beuve, Victor Hugo, Alex. Dumas and de Lamartine are now the sole survivors of that brilliant galaxy of men of talents who cast such lustre on French literature from 1825 to the present day. They are all old men! Where are their successors?

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC GOSSIP.

The celebrated songstress, Carlotta Zucchi, has gone to Europe, if not with the golden opinions of all sorts of people, certainly with forty thousand gold dollars, which Max Maretzek paid her for her services during the last opera season. And, apropos, here is a little incident concerning the exit of the prima donna that may be worth relating, if only to illustrate the growing cuteness of those unpopular persons, the collectors of internal revenue. By some hocus pocus, known only to themselves, they found out that Zucchi's name was booked on the passenger list of a steamer that was to sail in twenty-four hours after the discovery was made. A crisis had arrived, and there was no time to lose. Uncle Samuel's tax gatherer at once presented himself before the cantatrice and in a few words as possible gave her to understand that on the \$40,000 in gold, which the indomitable Max had paid her a day or two previously, eighteen hundred dollars and some odd cents was due to the Government. The fair Italian demurred. She was not a citizen of this great country; she had never taken the oath of allegiance; she owed nothing to revenue collectors or anybody else, and to cut the matter short, it was intimated to the shovel-nosed collector that he might as well be gone about his business: the swindle would not be submitted to. Tax gatherers, however,

are proverbially persistent. The fellow in this case would not be gone. Zucchi sent for friends and took advice, and finally paid the money in a fine storm of melo-dramatic passion, under protest.

Lord Dundreary has also been figuring in a new character in England. It seems that one Robertson commenced a divorce suit against his wife, whom he charges with undue familiarity with my Lord Dundreary. When the case came up for trial in the divorce court, Mr. Sothorn, through his own counsel indignantly denied the whole charge, denounced it as a conspiracy, and made application to have the case struck off the files of the court, which was promptly done.

A short time ago, Mr. Howard Paul was giving entertainments at a rival establishment in Liverpool. The theatre was doing a notoriously bad business, but the manager, true to his tactics of impressing the outside public, continued his plan of hanging out placards: "Pit full," "Only standing room in the boxes," when it was a well known fact that the theatre was almost empty. This doubtful policy forming the subject of a good deal of local gossip, Mr. Howard Paul, by way of a practical joke, had a burlesque set of placards in same type and style painted, and at 6 o'clock in the evening, before the doors were open, a huge bill appeared in the front of the hall, "very empty," a little later the public were informed that they were "Two in the pit;" this was removed to make way for one still larger and more imposing, "Sufficient to form an audience." At 9 o'clock another loomed out, "Room to lie full length in any part of the house," and when the entertainment was over, and the audience departed, a last and largest bill was displayed, "Not a soul in yet for to-morrow night's performance." This travesty of *les affiches* caused immense amusement in the town, and the placard loving manager, has since been less prolific in his imaginative announcements.

A new word has been invented in honor of Theresia, the French ballad singer—"Theresine;" anything common or vulgar in music.

Mr. Watts Phillips' new romantic drama, "the Huguenot Captain," was successfully produced at the Princess' Theatre, London, on the second.

The story of the Huguenot Captain is laid in the times immediately following the massacre of St. Bartholomew while yet the religious feud was raging between the Guise party and that of the King of Navarre.

Mr. Trentonove, sculptor, has sued Mr. Dion Boucicault, to recover payment for the part-execution of two busts—one of Mr. Boucicault, the other of Mrs. Boucicault, and of a statuette of that lady as the Colleen Bawn.

Signor David Costa, of the Grand Opera, Paris, will visit this country in the fall, accompanied by his celebrated ballet corps. This corps includes Mlle. Marie Bonfanti, said to be one of the most captivating divinities that ever tripped the light fantastic toe. They will probably go immediately to New Orleans.

The Washington and Chicago Opera Houses are both to let. Neither of them seem to flourish, for the reason probably of the little genuine taste for music in either city.

Jenny Lind, so far from retiring from the world, is giving concerts in England.

At a representation of "Arrah-na-Pogue," in Paris, the Emperor is said to have laughed heartily at the comic scenes, while the Empress wept abundantly at the serious parts.

"Slap bang," "Ka-too-solum," "Jolly Dogs," etc., are said to be the popular London songs at present.

ITALIAN OPERA AT NEW ORLEANS.—We learn from M. A. Guerin, comptroller of the Opera House, that he has received intelligence from M. Marcellin Alhaiza, the efficient manager, now in Paris, that he has been successful in engaging three other artists of the highest talent